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## Major Accomplishments of the U.S. Senate During the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress, First Session, to Date

This paper lists some of the Senate's accomplishments during the first seven months of the 109th Congress. Items are listed in numerical order of the public law number (or bill number if bill not enacted) under eight categories: Promoting Jobs and a Strong Economy; Cutting Wasteful Spending and Keeping Taxes Low; Defending America and Promoting Freedom; Helping to Ensure Quality Healthcare to All Americans; Assuring Opportunities for Lifelong Learning; Providing Affordable and Dependable Energy; Ending Frivolous Lawsuits; and Confirming Fair Judges through a Fair Process. This listing will be updated and re-issued periodically throughout the remainder of the Congress.

### PROMOTING JOBS AND A STRONG ECONOMY

#### **Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity (H.R. 3) – Signed by President**

*This law will authorize \$286.5 billion in funding for federal-aid highways, federal transit programs, and motor carriers safety programs for five years. It will provide financing for vital highway construction and repair projects, and provide states with the financing certainty necessary for longer-term infrastructure investment. Based on employment estimates produced by the Department of Transportation, this funding level will support more than 13 million American jobs. The law will also make a number of changes in federal law to provide states with more flexibility in both revenue and expenditure by ensuring a minimum guarantee for the Highway Account of 90.5 percent for 2005-2006, increasing to 92 percent for years 2008 and 2009, thus ensuring all states receive a more equitable percentage of the funding they contribute.*

#### **Dominican Republic – Central America – United States Free Trade Implementation Act (DR-CAFTA) – P.L. 109-53**

*This law implements the United States-Dominican Republic-Central America Free Trade agreement. This is the first free trade agreement between the United States and the Central American countries of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua, as well as the Dominican Republic. This agreement benefits U.S. businesses by leveling the playing field with America's 12<sup>th</sup> largest market for exported goods; 80 percent of U.S. exports to this region are immediately duty-free with the remaining 20 percent becoming free by 2010. This "win-win" agreement also benefits Central American countries by helping to provide economic stability in these democracies, an issue vital to our national security interests.*

**Junk Fax Prevention Act – P.L. 109-21**

*This law will protect Americans from receiving unsolicited advertisements through fax machines. It amends the Communications Act of 1934 to prohibit faxed advertisements unless the sender has an established relationship with the recipient or the advertisement contains a notice that the recipient may request that such transmissions desist.*

**Family Entertainment and Copyright Act – P.L. 109-9**

*This law makes it a crime to use a video recorder in a movie theater or to distribute a copyrighted work before its release or commercial distribution. It also legalizes movie-filtering technology that blocks sexually graphic and violent content, and it encourages the preservation and restoration of scholarly works. The movie industry believes that in-theater video recording of movies is a significant factor in approximately \$3.5 billion in piracy losses.*

**Bankruptcy Abuse Prevention and Consumer Protection Act – P.L. 109-8**

*This law, the first major revision to the U.S. Bankruptcy Code since 1978, makes improvements to the bankruptcy code in consumer, small business, and corporate contexts. In particular, the law ensures that only those individuals who earn less than their state's median income or those who are otherwise unable to pay their debts are able to wholly discharge them. At the same time, it ensures that those who have the ability to pay back some of their debt actually do so, rather than abuse the system. This law will save approximately \$3 billion annually for consumers through lower interest rates and better products and services.*

**Nomination of Christopher Cox to be Chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) – Confirmed by Unanimous Consent**

*As the President's choice to be the country's lead securities regulator, Christopher Cox will continue to promote the values of free enterprise while increasing the transparency of our financial institutions. During his nine terms in Congress representing California's 48<sup>th</sup> District, Cox earned a reputation as a fair-minded protector of both taxpayers and investors. Cox was unanimously confirmed to serve the remainder of a five-year term, which expires June 2009.*

## **CUTTING WASTEFUL SPENDING AND KEEPING TAXES LOW**

**Concurrent Budget Resolution for Fiscal Year 2006 (H. Con. Res. 95) – Conference Report Agreed to**

*This budget resolution would set total spending at \$2.58 trillion and total revenues at \$2.19 trillion. It meets the President's goal of cutting the deficit in half within five years by reducing the projected deficit from \$382.7 billion in 2006 (subject to mid-session review) to \$211 billion in 2010. With the exception of high-priority areas such as defense and homeland security, most spending programs are frozen at fiscal year 2005 levels. Notably, reconciliation instructions within the budget will achieve a \$34.7 billion net reduction in mandatory spending and reduce taxes by \$70 billion over the five-year budget window.*

## **DEFENDING AMERICA AND PROMOTING FREEDOM**

### **Renewal of the Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act – P.L. 109-39**

*As a means of promoting democratic rule and freedom of expression in Burma, this law places sanctions on the ruling Burmese military junta and supports and recognizes the National League of Democracy as the legitimate representative of the Burmese people.*

### **Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act for Defense, the Global War on Terror, and Tsunami Relief, 2005 – P.L. 109-13**

*This law provides \$80.04 billion for ongoing military operations, postwar reconstruction and relief in Iraq and Afghanistan, aid for international partners in the war on terrorism, and homeland security needs. It includes \$907.3 million in relief for victims of the Indian Ocean tsunami, including \$656 million for the Recovery and Reconstruction Fund.*

### **USA PATRIOT Improvement and Reauthorization Act (H.R. 3199/S. 1389) – Bill in Conference**

*This bill would permanently renew 14 provisions of the USA Patriot Act and temporarily extend two provisions previously set to expire. This renewal is essential to prevent future terrorist attacks by providing law enforcement and intelligence agencies with the tools necessary to detect, apprehend, and prosecute terrorists and criminals.*

### **Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, FY 2006 (H.R. 3057) – Bill in Conference**

*This bill would provide \$31.84 billion in total funding for the Department of State and foreign operations. It provides economic assistance and humanitarian aid, including \$2.87 billion to help combat HIV/AIDS, among other infectious diseases, and \$1.8 billion for the Millennium Challenge Corporation to reduce poverty in developing countries through economic growth. This funding affirms the United States' commitment to helping other nations in need, improving global health, and promoting freedom.*

### **Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act, FY 2006 (H.R. 2360) – Bill in Conference**

*This bill would provide \$31.86 billion in new budget authority for the Department of Homeland Security. Significant initiatives in the bill include: \$7.8 million for the Coast Guard; \$5.1 billion for the Transportation Security Administration, including funding for air and railway safety; increased funding for border security, to provide an additional 1,000 border patrol agents and 2,240 detention beds; and \$340 million for the U.S. Visitor and Immigration Status Indication Technology (US VISIT) to verify the identify of visitors with visas.*

### **Marine Debris Research, Prevention, and Reduction Act (S. 362) – Passed Senate**

*This bill would establish within the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA) and the United States Coast Guard a program to identify, reduce, and remove ocean debris to mitigate the harmful effects of debris on marine and coastal environments and to improve navigation.*

### **Ocean and Coastal Observation System Act of 2005 (S. 361) – Passed Senate**

*Under the direction of the National Oceanic Research Leadership Council, this bill will establish an advanced warning system along the coastlines of the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans and the Great Lakes to improve early warning and detection systems for tsunamis and other maritime natural disasters.*

**State Criminal Alien Assistance Program Reauthorization (S. 188) – Passed Senate**

*This bill reauthorizes the State Criminal Alien Assistance Program (SCAAP). SCAAP provides financial assistance to states and local governments with authority over correctional facilities that incarcerate or detain undocumented criminal aliens. This bill reflects Republicans' commitment to provide the necessary federal support to keep our homeland safe.*

**Tsunami Preparedness Act (S. 50) – Passed Senate**

*This bill would provide for the improved operation of a tsunami warning detection system, under the Direction of the Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA), for America's coastal regions. The bill also directs the Administrator to: establish community-based "tsunami hazard mitigation" programs in high-risk areas; provide support to the international entities to work with other participating nations to provide funding for a global tsunami warning system; and establish a program to improve the resilience of coastal communities to natural disasters.*

**National Ocean Exploration Program Act (S. 39) – Passed Senate**

*This bill would provide for the establishment of a national ocean exploration program under the direction of the Secretary of Commerce and within the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA). This program will: conduct archeological and scientific explorations of ocean environments including historic shipwrecks and little-known undersea regions; promote public education and discourse of ocean science; and work to improve the technical capability of U.S. oceanographic research.*

## **HELPING TO ENSURE QUALITY HEALTHCARE FOR ALL AMERICANS**

**Veterans Medical Services Supplemental, FY 2005 (S.A. 1071, to the Interior Appropriations bill) – P.L. 109-54**

*This amendment would provide an additional \$1.5 billion in funding to Department of Veterans Affairs to cover budget shortfalls in veterans' healthcare. This funding reflects our commitment to supporting the troops both overseas and at home, and will ensure that our returning servicemen and women receive the quality care that they deserve.*

**Patient Safety and Quality Improvement Act – P.L. 109-41**

*This law creates and implements a voluntary system of medical error reporting, so that preventable medical errors can be identified and actions can be taken to ensure that they do not continue to occur. Without these confidentiality protections, providers may not voluntarily report errors. Such reporting is critical to efforts to ensure patient safety and improve the quality of patient care.*

**Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act (S. 306) – Passed Senate**

*This bill would prohibit discrimination on the basis of genetic information with respect to health insurance and employment. It would prohibit a group health plan or other provider of health insurance from adjusting premiums on the basis of genetic information and requesting or requiring an individual or a family member of such individual to undergo a genetic test. In the employment context, it prohibits the use of genetic information for employment decisions, such as hiring, firing, job assignments, and promotions.*

## **ASSURING OPPORTUNITIES FOR LIFELONG LEARNING**

### **Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement Act (S. 250) – Passed Senate**

*This bill would reauthorize the Carl D. Perkins vocational education program with a number of reforms. These reforms would improve the academic focus and performance of all students, create a more effective and accountable system, build stronger partnerships between technical education and related businesses, and require states to develop an integrated curriculum of high school, college, and technical coursework to create an industry-recognized degree.*

## **PROVIDING AFFORDABLE AND DEPENDABLE ENERGY**

### **Energy Policy Act (H.R. 6) – Signed by President**

*This law provides a comprehensive national energy policy that will help meet America's long-term energy demands by encouraging greater domestic production, greater fuel diversity, and improved energy infrastructure. It also provides funds for the research and development of new energy technologies and encourages energy efficiency.*

### **Department of the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, FY 2006 – P.L. 109-54**

*This law provides more than \$26 billion in discretionary funding for fiscal year 2006. It includes: funding for the Department of Interior, the Environmental Protection Agency; Clean Water State Revolving Fund; cultural agencies; and various other agencies. This law significantly increases funding for wildland fire management activities, and funds oil and gas leasing, timber and range programs, and other revenue-generating activities, which are estimated to generate income to the government of nearly \$14 billion in fiscal year 2006.*

### **Energy and Water Appropriations Act, FY 2006 (H.R. 2419) – Passed Senate**

*This bill would provide more than \$31 billion in new budget authority for fiscal year 2006. This funding includes: \$25 billion for the Department of Energy; \$577 million for Nuclear Waste Disposal (Yucca Mountain); and \$5 billion for the Army Corps of Engineers. In approving this bill, Republicans defeated an amendment that would have reduced funding in the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) budget for an Air Force-led study of Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator (RNEP) concepts. The study would consider the feasibility of modifying existing bombs to address the growing number of hard and deeply buried targets used by our adversaries.*

## **ENDING FRIVOLOUS LAWSUITS**

### **Class Action Fairness Act – P.L. 109-2**

*The law curbs abuses in our courts that have driven up costs to consumers without benefiting the public. Over the past decade, class action lawsuits have grown over 1,000 percent nationwide, leading to increasingly unjust settlements that enrich a select few lawyers, while hurting plaintiffs and businesses in virtually every sector of America's economy. This law addresses these abuses by moving certain large, interstate class actions from state courts into federal courts and creates a consumer bill of rights to ensure that the class-action legal process protects the rights of plaintiffs.*

**The Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act (S. 397) – Passed Senate**

*This bill would address the politicization of our court system by a small number of anti-gun activists who have attempted to hold the firearm industry legally responsible for the criminal conduct of others. These frivolous lawsuits have forced the firearms industry to spend nearly \$200 million defending the right to produce a legal product. In the event of a large verdict, this relatively small industry could be destroyed, and Americans' ability to exercise their Second Amendment rights could be dramatically curtailed.*

**CONFIRMING FAIR JUDGES THROUGH A FAIR PROCESS**

**Nomination of Priscilla Owen, of Texas, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the Fifth Circuit – Confirmed 56-43**

*Justice Owen's nomination was filibustered by a partisan minority for more than four years before she received an up or down vote on the Senate Floor.*

**Nomination of Janice Rogers Brown, of California, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the District of Columbia Circuit – Confirmed 56-43**

*Justice Brown's nomination was filibustered by a partisan minority for 22 months before she received an up or down vote on the Senate Floor.*

**Nomination of William H. Pryor, Jr., of Alabama, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the 11<sup>th</sup> Circuit – Confirmed 53-45**

*Justice Pryor's nomination was filibustered by a partisan minority for more than two years before he received an up or down vote on the Senate Floor.*

**Nomination of David W. McKeague, of Michigan, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the 6<sup>th</sup> Circuit – Confirmed 96-0**

*Justice McKeague's nomination was filibustered by a partisan minority for three years and six months before he finally received an up or down vote on the Senate Floor.*

**Nomination of Richard Griffin, of Michigan, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for 6<sup>th</sup> Circuit – Confirmed 96-0**

*Justice Griffin's nomination was filibustered by a partisan minority for nearly three years before he received an up or down vote on the Senate Floor.*

**Nomination of Thomas Griffith, of Utah, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the District of Columbia Circuit – Confirmed 73-24**

*Democrats had threatened a filibuster of Mr. Griffith's nomination during the 108<sup>th</sup> Congress and refused to allow his nomination come to a vote.*